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ALBANIAN JUSTICE SECTOR STRENGTHENING PROJECT (JuST)



QUARTERLY REPORT (January – March 2015)

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On the cover: Chief Judge Artan Hajredinaj of the Tropoja District Court launches “Justice without Delays” on February 10, 2015. Photo by O.Lolo.

Introduction

Chemonics International is pleased to present its sixteenth and penultimate quarterly report describing the activities of the Albanian Justice Sector Strengthening Project (JuST). Throughout the quarter, international donor organizations and high level justice system experts worked through a process designed to produce a set of reforms and justice sector improvements that can be enacted by the Parliament. While this “top down” effort proceeded, JuST continued to work at the grass roots level to solidify its accomplishments over the past four years. As USAID’s officially-designated representative on two working groups of the Parliamentary judicial reform process, JuST is working to inform all members on the status of USAID investments, and to propose language for amendments where Parliamentary action is necessary to ensure that the legal framework supports best practices. With the end of the project in sight, JuST is concentrating all efforts on ensuring that its achievements will be carried forward in a sustainable manner into the future.

Highlights and Deliverables Completed this Quarter

- Inspired by the results showcased at the National Court Leadership Conference in December, two courts – on their own initiative – launched “Justice without Delays” in their communities, and a third court has expressed interest to do the same.
- Digital audio recording was extended to both the First Instance and Appellate Courts of Shkodra.
- Installation of digital audio recording equipment was completed in the Tirana First Instance Administrative Court.
- A nation-wide central archive for audio recordings was installed and successfully tested.
- The number of court hearings audio recorded continues to rise, with nine courts now exceeding the 90% threshold.
- The independent media venue, www.investigim.al, is thriving and has broadened its reach in Albania and throughout the region.
- Members of the Association of Journalists for Justice traveled to Sarajevo and established ties with the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN) and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP).
- Continuing Legal Education is being expanded to a total of six regional chambers plus the National School of Advocates.

Technical Activities by Project Component

JuST works in three strategic areas. First, working with justice sector institutions, it aims to increase court transparency, fairness, and efficiency – a key requirement for eventual EU accession. Second, working with civil society organizations and the media, it seeks to promote accountability from the “grass roots” level by bolstering their watchdog and anticorruption roles. Third, recognizing the importance of well-trained professionals, it is working to strengthen the legal profession and legal education. The project is part of ongoing U.S. support to the rule of law and good governance in Albania, with an emphasis on improving justice delivery and increasing public demand for accountability in the justice sector. The following describes the specific activities initiated or completed during the second quarter of the fifth year of this five-year project.

Component One – Increased Court Transparency, Fairness, and Efficiency

The first component of JuST is focused on court operations through a number of strategies designed to address the lack of transparency and organizational deficiencies which impede the ability of the Albanian judiciary to implement meaningful reform. Intervention results include: a)

more accurate trial records; b) more efficiently-run courts that are more open to the public; and c) reduced case backlogs.

JuST is advancing these objectives through direct support to the courts in establishing systems for producing and making available verbatim records of legal proceedings; technical assistance to promote greater use of public courtrooms for the public benefit; better court management practices; and assistance to selected pilot courts to introduce and expand the use of mediation for resolving commercial and family law disputes.

More Accurate Trial Records through Digital Audio Recording

JuST is continuing its steady progress in equipping all Albanian courtrooms with digital audio recording technology. During the quarter, JuST completed installation of equipment and training of court personnel in the District and Appellate Courts of Shkodra, and coordinated a visit to the Appellate Court for the new US Ambassador, Donald Lu. Installation was also completed in the Tirana Administrative Courts, with training to follow early in the next quarter. Two court servers were purchased for two small courts in the North (Kukes and Tropoja) as a prerequisite for ICMIS and Digital Audio Recording (DAR) implementation.

The most significant advance on the equipment side of the DAR initiative was the installation and successful testing of the Central Record Archive on the secure premises of the National Agency for Information Services. In the near future, this final USAID investment will provide high security greater accessibility for what has become “mission-critical” data – the audio recordings of court proceedings. It will permit online access to audio recordings anywhere in the country without the need to transfer files via physical media or CDs. It will also permit judicial inspectors to access audio recordings from their offices, bringing both greater efficiency and more accountability to the judiciary.

Modern court technology – whether it be court case management information systems, audio recording, or electronic filing – all have the potential for improving the quality of justice, but only if they are intelligently used. Throughout the project, JuST has employed strategies designed to promote full implementation of audio recording and to achieve the potential benefits that technology can offer. A significant element of our multi-part strategy has been to measure performance based on the principle that “if you do not measure results, you cannot tell success from failure.” The success of this strategy was never more evident than during this quarter.

Using the project-developed automated reporting tool, “PAKS+,” the level of audio recording technology implementation can be quantified and expressed as a percentage of cases audio recorded. These figures are compiled by each court and by individual judge, and the results have been presented at every JuST-organized court event. Over time, demand for this information has grown, especially following JuST-organized trainings for judicial inspectors in both the Ministry of Justice and the High Council of Justice.

Illustrating the principle that “if you cannot see success, you cannot reward it,” the Minister of Justice publicly praised both the Serious Crimes First Instance Court and the Serious Crimes Appellate Court for achieving 100% compliance with the Ministry’s Instruction mandating audio recording at the annual presentation of court statistics in March. The Minister went on to enumerate the many benefits stemming from USAID support for audio recording. At a similar presentation of annual statistics in Vlora, the Minister praised the Vlora Appellate court for consistently registering 100% usage of DAR, reiterating that non-compliance will be considered grounds for disciplinary proceedings.

Equally important is the corollary that “if you cannot recognize failure, you cannot correct it.” Through information provided in the PAKS+ report, which identified a particular judge who almost never used the audio recording technology, the High Council of Justice initiated disciplinary proceedings in March, and the Minister of Justice called for the judge’s dismissal. The entire hearing focused on DAR usage information displayed in the report and the legal obligation to produce a verbatim record through the recording process. No one disputed the statistical information from the PAKS+ report. Every member of the High Council of Justice expressed strong support for the importance of using DAR. Although the judge was not dismissed, he was warned. Using data in this manner is a powerful incentive for correction and improvement, and illustrates that there will be no turning back to previous practices.

A final noteworthy development involved a decision by a 3-judge panel of the Tirana Court of Appeals that reversed a Tirana District Court decision on the grounds that the court secretary had neglected to write down the statement of a witness, notwithstanding the existence in the file of the full audio recording of the witness’s statement. The case was sent back for retrial by a new panel. This decision sparked frustration and outrage among several trial judges, who brought it to the attention of the JuST Chief of Party. USAID promptly registered its views through two high-level meetings and with strongly-worded letters to the Minister of Justice and the High Council of Justice. JuST COP Carver was invited to submit an *amicus curiae* brief to the Albanian Supreme Court. As a direct response to USAID’s letter, the Minister of Justice sent official letters to every court in the nation stating:

The USAID JuST project that enabled the installation of the digital audio recording system in the district and appellate courtrooms has raised a concern that in some criminal proceedings the adjudication panel does not consider the audio record of court proceedings as a procedural document. These actions create a situation that goes against the interests of justice and poses a threat to the considerable investment made by this project, which aims at guaranteeing a verbatim record of court proceedings.¹

The letter went on to remind courts of the legal obligation to use audio recording, and “to consider it as the official record of court proceedings.” Taken together, these developments during the quarter indicate that digital audio recording has now become a basic requirement for courts, and that failure to use it will not be tolerated.

Improved Court Management Leading to More Transparent and Efficient Court Operations including Court Hearings that are More Open to the Public

For the past year, JuST has addressed the chronic problem of court delay and inefficient case processing procedures by encouraging courts to employ “active case management” practices. Working jointly with the OSCE Justice Project, JuST launched the “Justice without Delays” initiative by selecting a court willing to implement recommendations contained in OSCE’s court monitoring study, “Towards Justice.” The all-women Kruja District Court was selected as the first demonstration court to implement the basic principles of active case management. Their efforts produced immediate and significant results. Given the success of this first demonstration court, JuST and OSCE began working with the much larger Korça District Court for a second demonstration. The results from that court were equally impressive.

Through this initiative, judges have been encouraged to take control of their calendars and apply proven, common-sense principles to their work. These principles include keeping continuances to a minimum; insisting on firm trial dates; and conveying clear expectations of what is required of

¹ Letter from Minister of Justice Nasip Naço to all courts “on the use of audio recording system in district and appellate courts,” dated March 11, 2015, Protocol No. 1474/1.

lawyers, prosecutors, parties, and state institutions. By acting in a unified manner, they have achieved remarkable success almost overnight.

In December, JuST convened its annual Court Leadership Conference bringing together chief judges from all courts in Albania. The conference was organized around a presentation of results achieved by these two courts, and a longer discussion on practical steps to expand these successful practices to other courts. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with a number of chief judges expressing interest in launching similar initiatives in their own courts. It has become apparent from the experience from the first two successful demonstrations that active case management is a “win-win” for all involved, including the public, the judiciary, state institutions, lawyers, experts, and the parties themselves.

Shortly after the Court Leadership Conference, two District Courts – Puka and Tropoja – launched their own versions of “Justice without Delays.” Neither court asked for donor assistance. Both court chief judges took the initiative by asking questions to their colleagues from Kruja and Korça and gathering written materials, forms, brochures, and action plans from their colleagues. In both communities, the chief judges called together court stakeholders to announce and explain the initiative. JuST applauds their resourcefulness, and is working with OSCE to identify ways of encouraging and supporting their efforts in the near future. As the quarter came to a close, yet another court, Kurbini, requested assistance from OSCE and JuST to start “Justice without Delays.”

Reduced Case Backlogs through Implementation of Mediation

Reducing case backlogs is an important objective in building trust in the judicial system. Besides the active case management techniques described above, JuST is also working on alternate dispute resolution techniques – mediation. Mediation, when successfully implemented, brings multiple advantages to the court system, including reduced costs to courts. Furthermore, parties that work out their differences together, in the context of mediation, are likely to be more satisfied with the outcome. Mediation also tends to be a much quicker process than traditional litigation. For these reasons, USAID has actively supported the development of mediation in Albania.

JuST support for mediation has taken several forms. JuST has sought to strengthen the National Chamber of Mediators through a variety of mechanisms, including capacity building, support for an office, bringing in a European mediation expert to conduct “training of trainers” (ToT), and financial support to maintain the court-connected mediation programs in Durres and Korça. Despite sustained assistance since the first year of the project, during the quarter the number of cases referred for mediation continued to dwindle to a trickle, despite the existence of a financial support agreement with the National Chamber of Mediators (NCM). In Durres, where there is a long history of successful court-based mediation, there were no cases referred for mediation. In Korça, only 14 cases were referred to mediation, with just 4 successfully resolved. Given these poor results, the Chief Judge of the Korça District Court is planning to re-assign the office to a more productive use.

Symptomatic of poor leadership, the board of the NCM did not defend its interests in a legal challenge recently filed by the competing faction. As a result of the NCM’s continued lack of leadership and commitment to mediation, JuST has decided not to extend support beyond what had been foreseen in the annual work plan. JuST is working closely with the European Union delegation, which plans to enter into a twinning agreement on mediation. All materials developed with USAID support, including training curricula, strategic plans, and capacity building materials

have been shared with the EU delegation, along with a full debrief of JuST's experience with mediation.

Challenges Ahead for Component One

During the next quarter, JuST will be moving into uncharted territory with its ambitious plan to connect court servers to an advanced Central Record Archive now installed in the National Agency for Information Services. JuST decided to adopt an open source backup solution rather than the solution proposed by "For the Record" (FTR), and to test it on three courts as an initial pilot. If this approach is successful, the cost savings will be substantial. These funds will be needed to complete backup functionality for the remaining courts. Technical staff will be able to assess bandwidth and other requirements for the remaining courts once the backup systems of the three pilot courts are fully operational.

The other challenge on the horizon is simply the time needed for working through normal bureaucratic processes involved in implementing remaining project activities. A great deal needs to be done, and time is running short for the JuST project, especially given the traditional summer lull in activities. Smooth cooperation must exist among several government agencies to permit online access of audio recordings by inspectors in both the Ministry of Justice and the High Council of Justice. So far, intra-governmental cooperation has been excellent, but even routine approvals take time, given the highly technical nature of this final phase.

Component Two – Strengthened Civic Engagement to Help Stem Governmental and Justice Sector Corruption

The second JuST component is designed to increase the organizational capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs), promote stronger and more effective civic participation, increase public awareness of corruption, and bolster the role of media in investigating and reporting corruption cases. A small grants program serves to strengthen NGOs and promote activities to expose corruption and hold public institutions accountable. Close oversight by JuST and frequent visits to the field to participate in activities organized by grantees have contributed to successful implementation of the grants program.

Capacity Development for Professional Organizations

Union of Albanian Judges (UAJ)

As part of its support to strengthen the institutional and technical capacities of the Union of Albanian Judges (UAJ) during this quarter JuST worked to facilitate the participation of two board members to the Annual Meeting of the European Association of Judges (EAJ) to be held in Poland in May. Participation will permit the new Chair, Judge Gerd Hoxha and fellow board member, Chief Judge of the Tirana Appellate Court Alaudin Malaj to continue UAJ's relationship with other judicial organizations in Europe. During the quarter, UAJ was an active participant in the ongoing work of the Special Parliamentary Commission on Justice Reform.

Justice and Good Governance CSO Grants Program

An important element of USAID's assistance to Albania is strengthening civil society with the objective of increasing citizen participation and achieving greater transparency and accountability from governmental institutions. Two grants completed their planned activities during the quarter, and another grant began implementation.

Eye of the New Media (SMR)) in partnership with the *Association of Journalists for Justice (AJJ)* completed a 14-month project designed to promote greater citizen participation in tackling corruption in the delivery of social services at the local level in February. The approach involved raising awareness among citizens about how the Law on Social Services is supposed to work, advocating for full transparency in the distribution of benefits, encouraging citizen participation in the local decision-making process, and exposing and publicizing abuses in the delivery of benefits. This grant focused on Local Government Units (LGUs) in the Vlora and Fieri regions. During the quarter, 14 trainings on the Law on Social Services were organized, reaching 156 local officials along with awareness-raising meetings with 300 community members, mayors, and other municipal representatives.

Illustrative of the lack of oversight which permits corruption was the case of a local administrator of a commune in the Vlora region. As uncovered by an investigative journalist and member of the AJJ, for five years this individual had included families who had not submitted required documentation, and were not eligible for public assistance on the beneficiary rolls. He admitted that he had personally signed forms that should have been signed by beneficiaries. This practice enabled him to divert the benefits to third parties in violation of the law. Furthermore, the journalist learned that three families were receiving social assistance while simultaneously receiving retirement benefits – another violation of law. These abuses were made known to the local councilors who were unaware of the practice, though they were signing the beneficiary lists each month. As a result of uncovering these abuses, beneficiary lists are now posted publicly. Ineligible welfare recipients have been removed from the lists, and benefits are now going to the individuals who truly qualify for and need them. The published articles describing these practices have caught the attention of administrators at the Ministry level, creating more pressure for accountability.

There have been numerous measurable results at the local level as a result of this grant project. A total of 58 eligible families were recently included on the assistance rolls, and 280 ineligible families were removed. In order to address discrimination against Roma families, which remains particularly acute, the project has assisted more than 100 Roma people in qualifying for health benefits in a commune in Fier, and assisted in adding another 20 Roma families from a commune in Vlora to the assistance rolls. Finally, the plight of victims of domestic violence was publicized and the fact that many women receive neither the physical protection nor the financial support to which they are legally entitled. The project has identified numerous problems in the application of existing laws, and has provided recommendations for amendments.

The abuses uncovered at the municipal level have resulted in a total of 46 articles published on www.investigim.al supported by 132 audio interviews and 38 videos. Of these published articles, 30% have been picked up and re-published by mainstream media outlets, a real indication that the AJJ has become a respected source of investigative reporting. As an update to an item described in a previous quarterly report, an investigative story first released on www.investigim.al has come to a legal conclusion. An explosive video entitled “The Socialist Party Secretary in Saranda” implicated a former MP of soliciting sex in exchange for a job offer. He was recently convicted of the crime of sexual harassment and sentenced to two years in prison. This story, uncovered and published during an earlier phase of this grant project, became a national scandal widely reported by 18 other media outlets.

The final conference of the project was held on February 27, 2015, where 52 representatives of local institutions and other groups of interest gathered to discuss the issues revealed by the project. The final report includes recommendations and suggestions shared during the conference and will be sent to the respective national and local institutions with the goal of bringing about permanent change in the way the social services system is administered.

Center for Legal Civic Initiatives (CLCI), a local legal aid provider, completed a 10-month project aimed at strengthening the Legal Clinic, described in detail in the following section of this report. The objective of the grant was to pair Legal Clinic students up with experienced lawyers to gain practical experience. Through this grant, CLCI referred 41 cases to the Legal Clinic, attended by 64 students, who prepared 39 written legal opinions addressing issues ranging from gender-based violence, legal remedies for discrimination, divorces, determination of alimony, property disputes, and employment claims.

In addition to the practical experience that students gained by preparing legal materials for specific cases, CLCI also organized trainings for these students and “pro bono” students not enrolled in the Legal Clinic, but still seeking opportunities to gain practical experience. Three two-day training sessions were organized, along with two simulated trials based on actual cases. This productive relationship between the University of Tirana Law Faculty (UTLF) and CLCI will continue based on a Memorandum of Understanding currently being negotiated.

In a new grant, *Eye of the New Media (SMR)* in coalition with the *Association of Journalists for Justice (AJJ)* began a project focused on the public health sector. The project follows a similar methodology to their previous project, involving public awareness, promotion of patient rights, and exposure of corruption through the efforts of investigative journalists. This 6-month project started on January 1, 2015.

During the quarter, a series of meetings were held with the Directors of Gjirokastra Public Health Directorate and the University Hospital “Shefqet Ndroqi” in Tirana for the purpose of developing a coordination plan of project activities. Two questionnaires have been used to interview 200 patients, their relatives, community members and public health officials for the purpose of identifying main issues of the public health sector.

Early findings show that public health employees lack knowledge of anticorruption mechanisms. Initial results indicate that no facility has posted the required statement of patient rights, and that very few health centers had complaint boxes. The problems and needs identified through this survey process will form the basis for developing training modules, which will be designed to develop capacities to address the problems. The grant project is also placing complaint boxes in each facility.

Working in collaboration with Eye of the New Media, AJJ journalists have written and posted six investigative stories based on the information that is surfacing through this process on www.investigim.al. In addition, the AJJ is currently designing, printing, and distributing T-shirts with the message “Denounce at www.investigim.al” for an Anticorruption Awareness Campaign.

Justice Reporting Fellows

During the reporting period, JuST continued to provide technical assistance to the Association of Journalists for Justice (AJJ) and the independent investigative website, including organizing, a study tour in Sarajevo, Bosnia in January 2015 for six AJJ journalists to attend trainings and meet with members of the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN) and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP). The training program outcomes were positive and have led to cooperation and mentorship in writing in-depth regional investigative stories. The journalists brought new ideas back from Sarajevo for advancing their work and increasing the attractiveness of their online presence. Additionally, they are now better equipped to manage a nonprofit organization and raise funds.

AJJ is running an internship program with journalism students from Tirana, Fier and Elbasan. Working side by side with AJJ members, the students are gaining experience in collecting data

and interviewing sources for producing investigative stories. AJJ is also organizing training programs as a result of the training of trainers (ToT) previously offered by JuST. During the quarter, 28 journalism students from universities in Tirana and Elbasan were trained on writing investigative stories and producing video documentaries.

Finally, the AJJ has successfully organized three regional meetings in Vlora, Shkodra and Korça aimed at creating regional units and increasing membership. Sixty one (61) local reporters and journalism students participated. At the end of the quarter, JuST facilitated a general assembly of the association where new board members were elected.

The AJJ continues to implement activities funded by other donors (such as SOROS, REC, and US Embassy), which will increase the likelihood of sustainability after the completion of JuST.

The Independent Venue for Investigative Journalists

The strength and vitality of the independent venue for investigative journalists, www.investigim.al, continues to gain momentum as measured by the number and quality of published articles, and the growing number of page views. During this quarter, 26 investigative articles (four more compared to the previous quarter) were published, and two campaigns on behalf of the Association of Journalists for Justice were conducted: one through Facebook and another via mass email.

The viewership of the investigative website reached 6,244 page views, of which 78.7% were new visitors and 21.3% returning visitors. Broken down by location, 69.94% of viewers were from Albania, with the remainder from neighboring countries.

Challenges Ahead for Component 2

JuST has issued four rounds of the small grants program under Annual Program Statements (APS), and has also released five Requests for Applications (RFAs) throughout the life of the project. JuST has evaluated forty eight proposals, and 15 grants have been awarded. However, since most of the proposals focusing on gender mainstreaming have not been effective, during the next quarter JuST will work to strengthen the capacities of CSOs to promote gender equality in their local communities as part of their efforts to build participatory democracy. Training will be organized around these themes for interested CSOs as well as JuST grantees.

Component Three – Strengthened Legal Profession

The third JuST component is designed to enhance the legal competence and professionalism among practicing lawyers, and to reinforce practical skills among law graduates in the country. To achieve these objectives, the project works closely with the National Chamber of Advocates (NCA) to sustain its Continuing Legal Education (CLE) program for lawyers. The project also works with the University of Tirana Law Faculty (UTLF) to promote clinical legal education intended to offer practical skills to aspiring lawyers.

Develop and implement Continued Legal Education (CLE) program

From the beginning of the project, JuST has maintained a close engagement with the National Chamber of Advocates (NCA) to establish a CLE program as a means of raising the level of professional competence among Albanian lawyers. Milestones achieved to date include amendments to the Law on the Legal Profession establishing a National School of Advocates (NSA) and making CLE mandatory; JuST support to the NCA to implement the new requirements; and expanding CLE through six additional regional chambers of advocates.

During the quarter, CLE courses continued in Durres and Vlora for the third year; in Fier for the second year; and began in Korça and Pogradec for the first time. CLE was also launched in Shkodra and Lezha. Classes in the much-larger Tirana chamber are scheduled to begin during the next quarter. Attendance continues to be high, demonstrating a strong demand for the kinds of classes offered. On a parallel track, the NSA continued to train 600 assistant lawyers in its second year of its initial training program. The NSA has had a very good start and JuST's future efforts will focus on assisting NSA with taking over continuous training for lawyers to augment the initial training for assistant lawyers.

Going forward, JuST will continue providing financial support for the final phase of the third year of the CLE program in six regional chambers. For long-term sustainability, JuST will assist NCA/NSA with drafting and adopting a CLE Regulation for developing a strategy for organizing the 4th year of CLE through the NSA.

Establish a Bar Journal with the National Chamber of Advocates to publish regularly

USAID support to the National Chamber of Advocates also includes assistance for establishing a Bar Journal as part of the broader effort to raise the professional standards and instill a sense of pride among practicing lawyers. The journal aims to foster professional debate amongst the Albanian legal profession, focusing especially on engaging practicing attorneys in legal research and writing. Set up as a quarterly publication of the NCA, *Avokatia* is now a respected legal periodical. During this quarter, the thirteenth issue of the journal was published. Some of the articles from this issue may be found on the website designed with JuST support:

<http://avokatia.al/revista/avokatia-13>. The publication of the thirteenth issue in January marked the third anniversary of the Bar Journal's publication. The issue opened with an Editorial that provided highlights on *Avokatia's* journey from when its first issue was published in January 2012.

Work is underway for the preparation and regular publication of the fourteenth issue in April, demonstrating a sustained capacity by the NCA to ensure a sustained periodical publication going forward. In the meantime, the Journal's *Facebook* page has already reached more than 2,200 fans, and includes alerts for new issues of the Journal, highlights from selected articles, and provides information on how to obtain a copy of the journal or become a contributor. Articles from the journal are being discussed in important professional forums, and quotes from articles are being used in government documents, such as the Analytical Document on the Justice Sector that was prepared by the Ministry of Justice in the framework of Albania's justice reform efforts. While JuST financially assisted the NCA for *Avokatia's* first six issues, the Journal is now financially self-sustainable.

Clinical Legal Education Program

Since the beginning of the project, JuST has been assisting the University of Tirana Law Faculty (UTLF) with establishing a clinical legal education program (CLE) designed to provide students with practical skills in handling real cases under proper supervision.

The fifth year of JuST's support to the Law Faculty began on a strong note with the Law School's Legal Clinic Presentation Ceremony, and the momentum is continuing. During the quarter, Legal Clinic students took on more than 15 new clients. The number of students enrolled in clinical courses increased to 90, following the creation of the Public Law Legal Clinic group. For the first time, all three UTLF departments have formed their groups, held clinical courses, and handled their own cases. In groups of two or three, and under the supervision of professors, students have worked with real clients faced with real legal problems. In collaboration with the CLCI lawyers,

students have been able to attend court hearings of the clients they assisted. To further promote the activity of the Legal Clinic, professors and students, facilitated by CLCI, held awareness-raising activities with the Tirana Prosecution Office, the Tirana First Instance Court, Constitutional Court representatives, representatives of the Community Center “Today for the Future,” and the National Center for Victims of Domestic Violence. All of these institutions expressed their willingness to collaborate with the Legal Clinic.

To develop a sustainability strategy for the Legal Clinic, JuST engaged the services of a Clinical Education expert, Professor Thomas Speedy Rice, from the Washington and Lee University. The consultant’s assignment took place from January 19-23, 2015. The objective of this consultancy was to assist the UTLF with a Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan, including a set of measures and recommendations that will guarantee continuity of the clinical program. As part of the scope of work, Professor Rice met with stakeholders, including the law school leadership, Legal Clinic professors, Legal Clinic board members, students, and the local legal aid provider, CLCI. In his assessment, Professor Rice noted that the Legal Clinic has already accomplished some of the more difficult tasks facing any new legal clinic. Specifically, it has secured a permanent place in the law school curriculum for clinical education taught by fulltime dedicated professors, establishing a well-equipped space for the clinical program to continue. Professor Rice also noted the genuine interest in clinical legal education among faculty members, particularly the professor running the criminal clinic.

In a comprehensive set of recommendations for sustainability, Professor Rice identified a series of issues that should be addressed to ensure a successful and sustainable clinical program, including clinical costs; faculty development; case selection; legal privileges; collaboration with the School of Advocates; student and legal clinic access; public outreach; and student practice rules.

During this quarter, as part of its public outreach efforts, JuST, with the facilitation of the European Center, organized two “Legal Clinic Open Days” at the Law Faculty. Students distributed brochures and leaflets on the concept of clinical education, the scope of the Legal Clinic’s activities, and the experiences of students. Students who had been involved in supporting live clients shared experiences with their peers and explained the benefits of practical learning. At least 93 people received information and materials on the Legal Clinic. The second Open Day focused on raising the awareness of institutional counterparts, such as the Ombudsman, the State Legal Aid Commission, and the Roma Community. Increased awareness is intended to broaden public understanding and support for the Legal Clinic and increase collaboration with local counterparts, which in turn will lead to more case referrals for students wishing to acquire “real world” experience.

Activities related to practice-oriented methodologies and mock trials have continued. During the quarter, the Public Law practice-oriented training and simulations took place. Eighty students attended the training and 12 conducted a mock trial for an administrative dispute. Preparations are under way for two more sessions of practice-oriented trainings and mock-trials, namely the Trial Advocacy training with the Criminal Law Department and the Civil Law Department training. Preparations have also started for supporting the UTLF with the organization of an Academic Conference on *“Legal Clinical Education, Law Students’ Practical Skills Building, and Practice-Oriented Teaching Methods: Bridging the Gaps between Theory and Practice.”* Professor Thomas Speedy Rice from the Washington and Lee University School of Law and a group of students from the University will be able to join the Conference, which is scheduled for April 28. The scope of this Conference is to encourage research and academic debate on improving the quality of law graduates in Albania by addressing the problems arising from the overly theoretical focus of the legal education curricula, through effective use of Clinical Education, and other practical skills-building mechanisms and teaching methodologies. It is also seen as a means of

building respect among faculty members and local academics in Clinical Education, which will help further strengthen the JuST-supported Clinical Education Program.

JuST will continue to work closely with the UTLF to assist them with the implementation of the sustainability strategy, with the organization of practice-oriented trainings, and with the organization of the academic conference on legal clinical education.

Challenges Ahead for Component Three

The NSA's 2 years of experience with initial trainings and the NCA's will to expand CLE courses in 6 regional chambers has exceeded our expectations in terms of trainings for lawyers. However, it is unclear how the NSA will take over continuous trainings in the upcoming year, and this constitutes a challenge that needs to be addressed.

The UTFL Legal Clinic's kickoff in Year 4 and its strong start in its second year of existence are promising in terms of maintaining a viable legal clinic program, and the most pressing issues related to future sustainability have already been identified. JuST will assist with all necessary steps to ensure sustainability of the program.

Quarterly Accrual Worksheet

Scroll across cells with red corners to read pop-up field descriptions.

Partner/Vendor: Chemonics International
 Contact: Nitara Layton/Sarah Byrne
 Phone: 202-955-6563/202-524-7682
 Fax: 202-955-7540

As of: Q2/2015

Contract/Agreement No. **182-C00-10-00105-00**

Project/Activity Name **Albanian Justice Sector Strengthening Project**

Agreement Start Date: 10/1/2010
 Agreement End Date: 9/30/2015

Agreement Ceiling:	\$	9,750,298.00	
Obligated Amount:	\$	9,105,090.00	(per Phoenix)
Ceiling Remaining:	\$	645,208.00	Formula (=C17-C18)

Total Disbursed:	\$	8,439,985.03	(per Phoenix)
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Last Payment Amount:		\$115,185.84	(per Phoenix)
For the Period:		Jan-15	

Unliquidated Balance:	\$	665,104.97	Formula (=C18-C21)
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Last Invoice, not yet disbursed:

Invoice No.		62217	
For the Period:		Feb-15	

Calculation:	January	\$	115,185.84	(Inv. No.: 062160)
	February	\$	125,129.83	(Inv. No.: 062217)
	March	\$	131,343.66	(estimate)
	Total	\$	371,659.33	(estimate for October-December 2014)

Accrual amount:	\$	371,659.33	Formula (=C34)
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(the value of goods and services provided to USAID, not yet paid for)

Est.Pipeline Amount:	\$	408,631
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Notes/Comments:

Obligated amount less disbursed amount, less accrual amount.
 Formula (=C18-C21-C36)

CTO Initials/Date: